



Your pregnancy:
Feeling your baby move

Feeling your baby makes you feel secure, and it is important. You can usually start to feel your baby move at 16 to 20 weeks into your pregnancy. In the beginning the movements are still weak, but they become stronger as the baby grows. It is sometimes also called “feeling life”. Why is feeling life so important? Your baby receives nutrition and oxygen through the placenta. If the placenta’s function is decreasing, the condition of your child can deteriorate. It will start to move less. It is important that you feel your baby move in the way you are used to. If you notice that your baby is becoming calmer or is moving differently than usual, contact your obstetrician or gynaecologist. This folder contains information about the normal movements of your baby during pregnancy and what you have to do if your baby is moving less or differently.



A normal movement pattern: what do you feel?

- **The first movements**

Most women feel their baby move for the first time at 16 to 20 weeks into their pregnancy. Have you had a baby before? You will usually recognise the baby moving in your belly sooner. Sometimes even before week 16. If this is your first pregnancy, it is normal to only start feeling the baby move after week 20. Often the first movements are described as “bells, bubbles or small plops” or “like your bowels, but different”. Once you have felt your baby move, you will recognise the movements. You will feel your baby move more and more often.

- **At 28 weeks**

The movements in your belly will become stronger and stronger. You can feel kicks, turns, waves and pokes. Your partner can feel it now too. If your baby is very active, you can see your belly move. At 28 weeks your baby develops a pattern of being asleep or awake. Sleeping usually lasts 20 to 40 minutes. Sometimes even an hour, but usually not longer than an hour and a half. As you baby sleeps they do not or hardly move. But as soon as your baby is awake, they are active. Most babies move in the afternoon and the evening.



Up to week 32 of the pregnancy the amount of movements increases. In the final weeks and around the due date the movements can become different and less strong. This is because the baby has less space to move. Many women experience “sliding” in their belly. It remains important that you regularly feel your baby move. It does not matter if the baby is in head or breech presentation.

- **Calm and active babies**

Some babies are active and others calm. This is different for every pregnancy. Make sure that you become familiar with the movements of your baby.

What can influence the movement and the feeling?

- **Location of the placenta**

If the placenta is located at the front of the uterus, you will not be able to properly feel the baby for up to 28 weeks. After 28 weeks the movements of your baby will become so strong that you can feel them.

- **Position**

How often you can feel your baby move, partially depends on your position. When you're lying down you can feel your baby better than when you're standing up. If you're working, you might experience less movement than you're used to. Your attention is focused elsewhere at that time.

- **Medication, alcohol, smoking**

Your baby will be a bit more lethargic if you're taking painkillers with morphine or sedatives. You will feel less movement. Smoking and drinking alcohol can influence the movements of your baby.

What do I do if my baby is moving differently, less or not at all?

- **Up to 24 weeks**

Not all women already feel life in their belly every day. Have you not yet felt your baby move after 24 weeks? Then contact your obstetrician or gynaecologist. He or she will listen to the heart sounds of your child. You will get an appointment for an ultrasound.

- **At 24 to 28 weeks**

In this period the pattern of the movements of your baby is still very different every day. If you're doubting whether you can sufficiently feel your baby, contact your obstetrician or gynaecologist. If necessary, you will get an extra check-up.

- **At 28 weeks**

You should now be able to feel your baby regularly every day. If your baby is moving less than usual, take your time to feel movement in your belly. You can feel your baby the best if you're lying on your left side. The blood flow in the placenta is the best in that position.

- **Lie on your left side for 2 hours.**
- **Do you feel less than 10 movements during these 2 hours or do you doubt the strength of these movements, and you are worried?**
- **Then immediately contact your obstetrician or gynaecologist. Don't wait until the next day!**

Visiting the obstetrician or gynaecologist



- **Check-up by the obstetrician**

Does the obstetrician perform your check-ups? They will ask if you will come to their practice, or they will visit you at home. They will ask for you to describe the movement pattern of your baby and the changes. They will listen to the heart sounds of your baby. They will also examine your belly and measure your blood pressure. Are there still doubts about the movements of your baby? The obstetrician will then refer you to the gynaecologist.

- **Check-up by the gynaecologist**

Are you under the supervision of a gynaecologist? Or has the obstetrician referred you? Then you will visit the Obstetrics department or outpatient clinic. In the hospital the obstetrician or gynaecologist will ask about the movement pattern of your baby and the changes you have felt. Your baby's heart rate is registered for at least half an hour. If your baby is moving, the heart will start to beat faster. That is a sign of a good condition. After that, or the next day, you will be given an ultrasound to check the amniotic fluid.

- **Positive results**

Are the results of the check-up positive? Your baby is in good condition. Many women will then feel their babies move properly again. You will receive an explanation of what to do if your baby is moving less actively again.

- **Do you have new doubts about the movements of your baby?**

When you're going home, you'll be advised to pay close attention to the movements of your baby. Do you have a period in which you have difficulty feeling your baby move once again? Then contact your obstetrician or gynaecologist. Don't hesitate to call again. It doesn't matter if you need to do this more often.

- **Negative results**

Are there doubts about the condition of your baby? Extra check-ups will be required. Depending on the results of the check-ups and how many weeks you've been pregnant, the recommendation may be that your baby has to be born as soon as possible.



Summary

- ➔ Get to know the movement pattern of your baby.
- ➔ Are you more than 28 weeks pregnant?
Do you have doubts about the movements of your baby?
- ➔ Lie down on your left side for two hours and feel the movements in your belly. Does your baby move less than 10 times in those 2 hours?
Or are you worried?
- ➔ Then contact your obstetrician or gynaecologist.
Don't wait until the next day!

Colophon

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